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SUBJECT: EDUCATION SECRETARY SPELLINGS MEETS WITH KEY
SPANISH LEADERS

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: During her June 29-July 2 visit to Madrid, Education Secretary Margaret Spellings met with Vice President de la Vega, Foreign Minister Moratinos, Education Minister Cabrera, and Madrid Community President Esperanza Aguirre. Vice President de la Vega emphasized the need for continued and expanded educational interchange between Spain and the U.S. She proposed a bilateral agreement to expand either university exchanges or joint research and development that could be signed by Secretary Rice during her anticipated visit to Spain in the fall of 2006. FM Moratinos renewed Spain's offer to fund both a hospital and a school in Iraq. Secretary Spellings and Madrid Community President Aguirre

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discussed the No Child Left Behind Act, which Secretary Spellings helped create in 2000. Aguirre said Madrid is modeling its new education initiative after the U.S. program. Education and Science Minister Cabrera proposed creation of an EU education network to attract more American graduate and beyond students and scientists to Europe. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings paid a four-day visit to Spain from June 29 to July 2. Secretary Spellings met with several high-level Spanish leaders in Madrid and shared views on the importance of research and development programs at the University level. as well as the No Child Left Behind Act. Spellings also met with Spanish Fulbright students and faculty and spoke at a business breakfast of the American Chamber of Commerce. She gave an interview to Madrid's second leading daily El Mundo (circ: 408,000) in which she discussed the university system in the U.S. and the No Child Left Behind Act.

FM Moratinos

13. (SBU) In a June 29 meeting with Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, Moratinos told Spellings that the GOS would like to fund both a hospital and a school in Iraq. Moratinos asked Spellings to work with Department and others to help the GOS identify a specific school project. He made a similar request to Ambassador Aguirre for details on a hospital to fund. (NOTE: This offer was in response to a request by S that Spain fund either a school or a hospital during a June 19 meeting with Moratinos in Washington. Per reftel, we have proposed and Moratinos has agreed to fund a

children's cancer hospital in Basrah. While the GOS has agreed, the payment details have not been finalized. The GOS has not made any announcement on the hospital, and Post requests Department not announce the project until we coordinate with the GOS. END NOTE.)

¶4. (U) Moratinos also emphasized Spain's desire for US-Spain cooperation in educational development in North Africa, acknowledging Secretary Spellings' leading role in BMENA in this area. Moratinos proposed coordination between a U.S. university in Ifran in Central Morocco and a new university being launched under the auspices of the Spanish and Moroccan monarchs called "The University of the Two Kings" located in Northern Morocco. Secretary Spellings and Ambassador Aguirre expressed gratitude for Spain's desire to work with the U.S. in these areas and undertook to develop concrete ideas.

VP de la Vega

¶5. (SBU) Spellings met with Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega on June 30. De la Vega began by noting the recent meeting between Secretary Rice and FM Moratinos as a sign of the improving bilateral relationship. De la Vega proposed a bilateral agreement to expand either university exchanges or joint research and development that could be highlighted by Secretary Rice during her anticipated visit to Spain in the fall of 2006. (NOTE: Post is developing several ideas to share with the Department on these and related issues such as IPR. END NOTE.) De la Vega emphasized the need for continued and expanded educational interchange between Spain and the U.S., and emphasized the "wonderful partnerships" between Spanish and American universities that already existed. Noting that her government's top education priorities are student interchange and university-level applied research and investigation, de la Vega put forward the idea of establishing a bilateral team in the respective

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Education ministries to work on improving the exchange of students and teachers.

¶6. (SBU) De la Vega said she has always been impressed with U.S. research programs and would like to improve Spanish programs with help from the U.S, particularly in the pharmaceutical field. De la Vega noted with regret that many of Spain's best and brightest go to the U.S. to study. Secretary Spellings replied that she had said the same thing

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about Spanish institutions earlier in the day. The Ambassador noted that pharmaceutical research would be difficult in Spain due to weaknesses in Spain's Intellectual Property Rights laws which could impede patenting of new discoveries. The Vice President denied that there are any problems with Spain's current IPR laws.

Esperanza Aguirre

¶7. (U) Secretary Spellings' June 30 meeting with Esperanza Aguirre, President of the Community of Madrid (equivalent to a state governor in the U.S.), focused on the No Child Left Behind Act. Esperanza Aguirre would like to send the Community of Madrid's Director of Education to the U.S. to consult with the Department of Education sometime in the near future, noting that Madrid is currently working on an education initiative modeled after the U.S. act. Secretary Spellings said she would be happy to have her Department host a Spanish visitor. Like VP de la Vega, Aguirre also was concerned with the state of Spanish research institutions and was committed to improving them.

18. (SBU) Ambassador asked Aguirre about the newly announced ETA negotiations. Aguirre, a key leader in the Popular Party which is vehemently opposed to negotiations with ETA, expressed her deep concern about the Zapatero government's ETA policy. She refuted any equation of the ETA situation with the Northern Ireland peace process, saying that ETA alone was the only party doing the killing. She expressed her strong view that President Zapatero should not negotiate until ETA had proven its disarmament, but she believes that negotiations will eventually be possible.

"Transatlantic Network of Knowledge"

19. (U) Prior to her meeting with Minister of Education and Science Mercedes Cabrera Calvo-Sotelo, Secretary Spellings witnessed the signing of a letter of intention between Ambassador Aguirre and Cabrera. This letter will promote the strengthening of scientific research ties between the U.S. and Spain. Cabrera and FM Moratinos are working together on a Spanish initiative to create a "Transatlantic Network of Knowledge" that Moratinos said is "a proposal to engage the USA in the education and scientific system of the EU." While still in the brainstorming phase, the intent of this plan is to create an education and scientific network within the EU that would attract American graduate, post-graduate and post-doctoral students and scientists to Europe. Secretary Spellings expressed interest in the idea.

110. (U) Secretary Spellings cleared this message.
AGUIRRE